

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A promotion method, in which merchandise sales are promoted by issuing points upon sale of merchandise, wherein comprising the steps of:
presenting point information related to prescribed points is presented issued for promotion of sale of merchandise to a user at a time of merchandise sales;
transmitting by said user transmits to a center device said presented point information presented in the point information presenting step, together with identification information for said user;
receiving at the center device said point information transmitted by said user in the point information transmitting step and said identification information for said user;
totaling and managing at said center device stores and manages points corresponding to said transmitted point information received in the receiving step for said user identified by said identification information; and,
offering a prescribed service at the time of merchandise sales is offered corresponding to the points to said user based on by referring to the points stored totaled and managed in correspondence to said user in the totaling and managing step.

2. (Currently Amended) The promotion method according to claim 1, wherein
the merchandise sales is performed by using an automatic vending machine, and
the point information presenting step comprises the step of the presentation of presenting to said user said point information is performed by a point issuing device.

3. (Currently Amended) The promotion method according to claim 2, wherein
said point information comprises a module code related to said point issuing device and a secret code related to said points, and
the point information presenting step comprises the step of encrypting at least the secret

~~code among said module code and said secret code, at least the secret code is encrypted before presentation to said user.~~

4. (Currently Amended) The promotion method according to claim 2, wherein
~~the point information presenting step comprises the step of presenting the presentation of~~
said point information is performed to said user by displaying said point information on a display unit connected to said point issuing device.

5. (Currently Amended) The promotion method according to claim 2, wherein
~~the point information presenting step comprises the step of presenting the presentation of~~
said point information is performed to said user by printing out said point information on a prescribed form from said point issuing device.

6. (Currently Amended) The promotion method according to claim 2, wherein
~~the point information presenting step comprises the step of presenting the presentation of~~
said point information is performed to said user by inputting said point information to a communication equipment of said user, by means of communication between said point issuing device and said communication equipment.

7. (Original) The promotion method according to claim 6, wherein
said communication equipment comprises a portable telephone set carried by said user, and
input of said point information to said communication equipment is performed using any of wire communication, wireless communication, infrared communication, and audio communication between said point issuing device and said portable telephone set.

8. (Original) The promotion method according to claim 3, wherein
said secret code comprises at least a point issue number, and
said center device judges duplicate use of the point information based on said point issue
number.

9. (Currently Amended) The promotion method according to claim 23, wherein
said module code comprises code information to identify said point issuing device, and
said center device manages a state of at least one of said point issuing device and the equipment
performing sales of ~~said merchandise automatic vending machine~~ in which said point issuing
device is provided, based on said module code.

10. (Currently Amended) The promotion method according to claim 1, wherein
~~the point information presenting step comprises the step of presenting the presentation of~~
said point information is performed to ~~said user~~ by attaching in advance, to said merchandise, a
printed matter on which is printed in advance said point information.

11. (Original) The promotion method according to claim 10, wherein
on the printed matter attached in advance to said merchandise are printed said points and
point information related to said points.

12. (Currently Amended) The promotion method according to claim 11, wherein
said point information is selectively concealed by a removable concealing member; the
user acquires said printed matter upon purchasing said merchandise;
the user mails to the center device said printed matter without removing said concealing
member from said printed matter, or transmits to the center device said point information
acquired from the printed matter by removing said concealing member from said printed matter;
said center device performs processing for addition of points based on either said point

information or said points printed on the printed matter which has been mailed without removing said concealing member therefrom; and,

a prescribed service is offered to said user based on the points resulting from said addition processing.

13. (Original) The promotion method according to claim 12, wherein said center device detects duplicate use of said points based on whether or not said concealing member has been removed from said mailed printed matter.

14. (Original) The promotion method according to claim 1, wherein said center device manages said user based on identification information for said user transmitted by said user.

15. (Original) The promotion method according to claim 1, wherein said center device permits the user to read point information stored and managed for said user in response to a request from said user.

16. (Currently Amended) A promotion system for promoting sale of merchandise by issuing points upon sale of merchandise, comprising:

point issuing means, provided in an equipment performing sales of said merchandise automatic vending machine, to present to users of the system point information related to prescribed points issued for promotion of sale of merchandise upon sale of merchandise;

a center device for storing and managing points corresponding to the point information presented by said point issuing means, in correspondence with said user;

communication means for transmitting to said center device the point information presented by said point issuing means, together with identification information for the user;

update means, provided in said center device, for decoding the point information transmitted by said communication means, and for updating points which have been stored and managed for said user based on the points corresponding to said decoded point information; and,

service providing means for offering a prescribed service to said user at a time of use of said automatic vending machine based on the points which have been stored and managed for said user.

17. (Original) The promotion system according to claim 16, wherein
said point information comprises a module code to identify said point issuing means,
and a secret code related to said points; and,
among said module code and said secret code, said point issuing means encrypts at least
the secret code before presenting the point information to said user.

18. (Original) The promotion system according to claim 16, wherein
said point issuing means presents said point information to said user by means of
displaying said point information on a display unit provided on the point issuing means.

19. (Original) The promotion system according to claim 16, wherein
said point issuing means presents said point information to said user by means of printing
out said point information on a prescribed form by the use of printing means provided in the
point issuing means.

20. (Original) The promotion system according to claim 16, wherein
said point issuing means comprises input means for inputting said point information to
said communication means through a communication between said point issuing means and said
communication means.

21. (Original) The promotion system according to claim 20, wherein
said communication means comprises a portable telephone set carried by said user, and
said input means inputs said point information to said portable telephone set using any of
wire communication, wireless communication, infrared communication, and audio
communication.

22. (Original) The promotion system according to claim 17, wherein
said secret code comprises at least a point issue number, and
said center device detects duplicate use of the point information based on the point issue
number comprised in said point information.

23. (Currently Amended) The promotion system according to claim 17, wherein
said center device comprises an equipment database to store and manage a state of at least
one of said point issuing means and the equipment performing sales of said
merchandiseautomatic vending machine in which said point issuing means is provided, in
correspondence with said module code.

24. (Original) The promotion system according to claim 16, wherein
said center device comprises a user database to store and manage circumstances of use of
the system by said user, in correspondence with the identification information for the user
transmitted by the user.

25. (Original) The promotion system according to claim 16, wherein
said center device comprises accessing means which enables said user to access the point
information stored and managed for the user, in response to a request from the user.